Depot Town Rag

November 2008

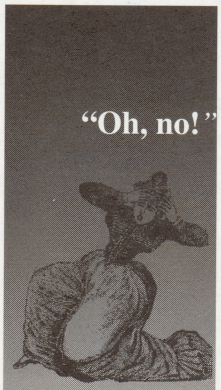
More bad news

100% FREE *RAG* CONTENT

Volume 23, Number 9

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Oh! The terrible things they've been saying about us!



Mitigating factors

More sensitive readers who tire of this month's negativity can skip to the inside pages immediately to review the neighborhood's seven saving graces—in case they have forgotten why we're here.

• Roger Katon is still smarting from the jibe he received when he extended his haberdashery career to Ann Arbor in 1981. When he mentioned that he lived in Ypsilanti, his customer uttered, "Oh, I feel so sorry for you!" The condescension continues.

• A Howell *Daily Press & Argus* story told of City Councilor and Planning Commission member Dawn Cooper saying she expected the toughening of an adult business ordinance to take a "good period of time" to get finalized. "But she expressed support for the concept," said reporter Dan Meiler on Friday, 18 May 2007. "All we have to do is think about what (Ypsilanti) looks like," said Commissioner Cooper. "We don't want that here." Former Ypsi Police Chief George Basar was not quoted in his new position there.

• Readers still fume over the *A2 News* tag: "Ypsilanti gives song writer a little something to sing about." Talkin' down, they said.

• At a special meeting last May on "the future of Ypsilanti" at Barton Hills Country Club, Ypsilanti Township Supervisor Jamnick said, "There are some people in Ypsilanti Township who don't want anything to do with the City of Ypsilanti—and some people in the City who feel the same about the Township." Developer Bill Kinley pointed out the last time there was a formal vote was "sixty years ago! Isn't it time we got over it?"

• *Michigan History* magazine, in "Fast Track Through the City" (September/October 2008) about the Willow Run Expressway, Hank Czerwick describes the "Bomber plant near Romulus"!

• Others have reported similar utterances since the railroad extended to The Great West via upstream Ann Arbor.

"Don't nobody bring me no bad news!"

-Evillene (Wicked Witch of the West), from the 1978 broadway production of The Wiz

Just about every Middle School in the U.S. does a musical production of The Wiz *at some time or other. It's a great way to build self-esteem.*

What to do when somebody's badmouthing you all the time? Get out there on that stage and sing and dance, kid! Truck out those Tinman and Scarecrow costumes and bring Dorothy back on to confront The Wizard of Oz on how to stay positive.

Seated left to right at the A3 Radio console: Raymond Taylor and Tom Saunders.Standing, left to right: Jim "Griff" Griffin, Warren "Nearly Normal" Kress, Ed Tucker

Ann Arbor Alive—from Ypsilanti!

AnnArborAlive.com has moved to 10 East Cross, just three doors from the Mighty Huron River. After 16 years in the former WPAG studios "high atop the Hutzel Building in downtown Ann Arbor," this Internet-based radio station could likely change their slogan to "in the shadow of the Follett House, down between the river and the railroad tracks, in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town!" as they continue their noble task of "coordinating community culture."

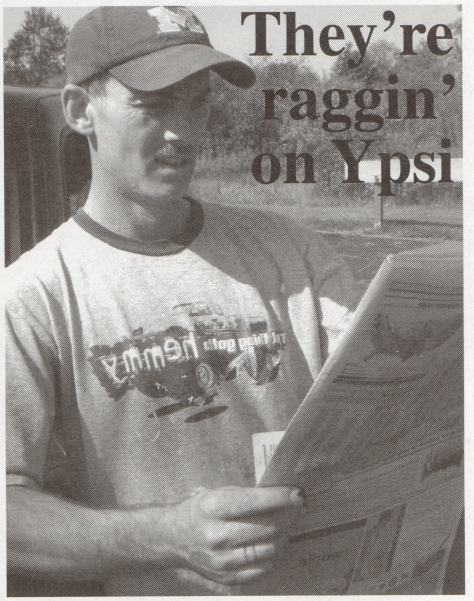
So much for slogans; these "radio guys" deliver: With experience in broadcasting and the music business going back to the halcyon days of MoTown and Barry Gordy, Ann Arbor Alive's staff brings a ton of talent to the neighborhood.

• Jim "Griff" Griffin, executive director

• Warren "Nearly Normal" Kress, chief engineer and IT guy (Internet Technology),

• Raymond Taylor, host and producer, Program Director for gospel and jazz

[continued overleaf]



Jeff Monaghan views the media with alarm

"Ypsitucky Supper" celebrated in A²

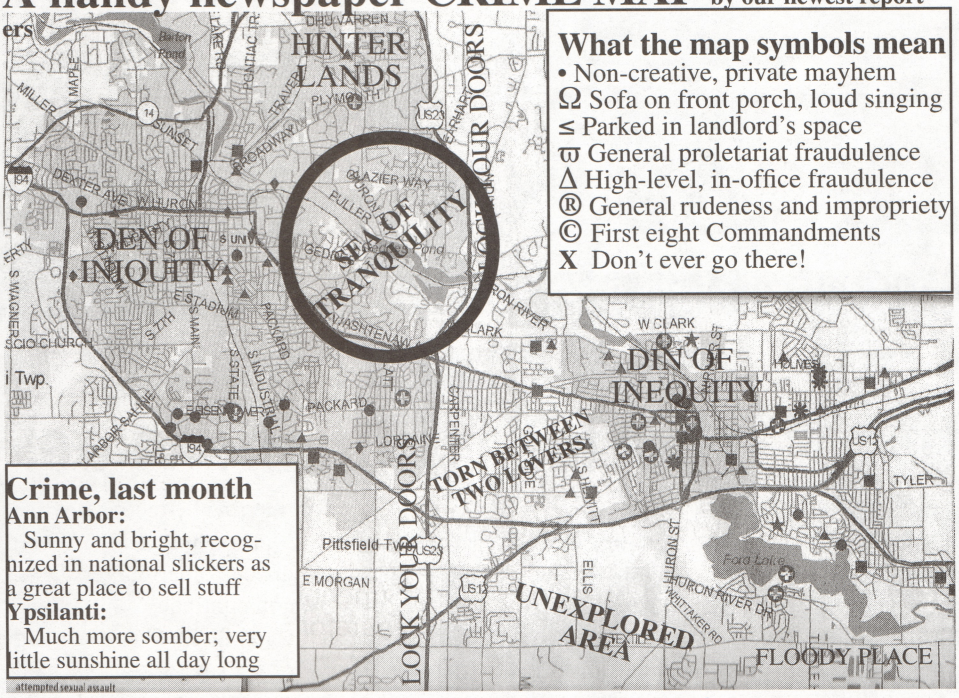
American Table Culinary Tours promoted an Ypsi-themed event to "pay tribute to all the mountaineers who followed the so-called 'Hillbilly Highways' in search of steady work," they told *The Ann Arbor News* while defending their event planned for Zingerman's Roadhouse last June.

"We certainly used it knowing that different people would have different reactions to this term," director of American Table Hanna Raskin told *The News*. "It is not inconceivable that some people might be taken aback by the usage of the term…" she said.

Zingerman's Ari Weinsweig said he had been calling it the "Harriet Arnow Dinner" and he wished to "distance himself" from the slur. Jane Fonda, who played Arnow in the biographical movie, "The Dollmaker," was not quoted in the report.

In *The News'* top-of-Page-One story, Ypsilanti Mayor Paul Schreiber said it was a "pejorative term," City Councilmember Lois Richardson said "it's really a derogatory term," and Ypsilanti Township Clerk Brenda Stumbo said she "likes the term––and the food."

A handy newspaper CRIME MAP by our newest reporters


What the map symbols mean
• Non-creative, private mayhem
Ω Sofa on front porch, loud singing
≤ Parked in landlord's space
ϖ General proletariat fraudulence
Δ High-level, in-office fraudulence
® General rudeness and impropriety
© First eight Commandments
X Don't ever go there!
HINTER LANDS
DEN OF INIQUITY
SEAT OF TRANQUILITY
DEN OF INEQUITY
TORN BETWEEN TWO LOVERS
LOCK YOUR DOORS
UNEXPLORED AREA
FLOODY PLACE
Crime, last month
Ann Arbor:
Sunny and bright, recognized in national slickers as a great place to sell stuff
Ypsilanti:
Much more somber; very little sunshine all day long
attempted sexual assault

Cub reporters quickly learn there is so much more to write about in a town where police reports are not filtered through a PR office first

"Perception is a difficult thing to change,"

–Auto industry executive at Detroit International Auto Show

Ypsi folks know all too well about perceptions but, with hard work and good public relations, change is possible. Some prime examples:

• "Stay out of the railroad district" prevailed here for more than a hundred years until Depot Towners started celebrating in the street. Others came down to see what all the hoopla was about and, today, it's the highway strip malls that people avoid.

• "You can buy culture on the streets of Ann Arbor" became the watchword for the plethora of summer art carnivals but, in just ten years, Ypsi's former Masonic Temple now hosts several community theatre groups and one of the classiest galleries for regional visual artists. And it goes on all year 'round—indoors! With heat and/or air conditioning.

• "Housing costs will go down once the college students leave" was the motto of realtors in both Ypsi and A² but Ann Arbor folks have discovered the housing stock in Ypsilanti is more affordable and in better condition than what they could find around UM's campus. Ypsi has become the new hometown for many former Arborlanders.

A²A Radio Guys

[continued from page one]

• Tom Saunders, program director, host

• Ed Tucker, business consultant

With a broadcast booth in the front window of the former headquarters of Esquire Interiors, the station's studio expands into a welcoming performance space, a wall of much-loved guitars, the engineer's booth, and a large events/performance studio at the rear, complete with an overhead door for moving large equipment.

Bookmark "Annarboralive.com" and keep it at the top of your computer's *home page*. Local radio just got a lot more modern down in Depot Town.

www.depottown.org

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SCOTT SOBBRY BRUCE SOBBRY

Bad news handled with style:

Detroit newscaster knocked out by treatment in Ypsi

35 years later, Biscoe has retired from WXYZ-TV, owns her own company, and looks better than ever

When Channel 7's Doris Biscoe came to Ypsilanti's Candy Cane Park in 1973 to cover the first girl player in a Little League baseball game, she was knocked off her feet when hit a surprise line drive foul ball. Dazed and confused for a few minutes, firefighter Bob Taylor came to her rescue at once, even though he was vice president of the same Ypsilanti Little League that had been fighting to enforce their national standards that excluded female players.

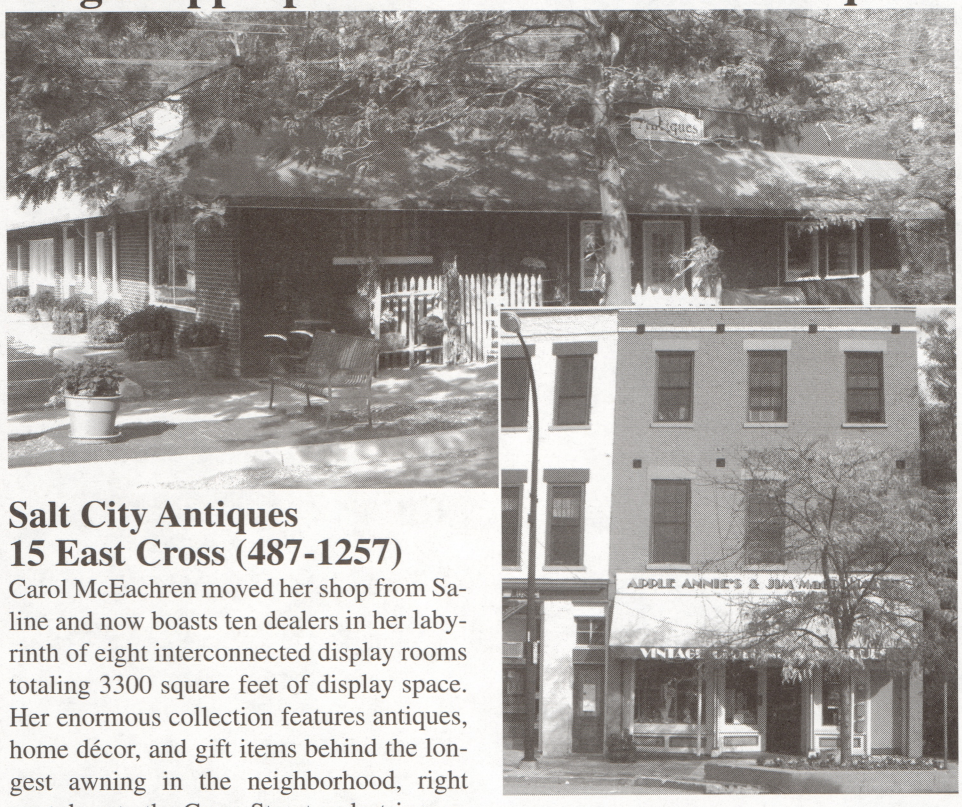
Biscoe recovered quickly, and today she is even more gorgeous than before. No damage done; no hard feelings; no negative news spin. What a class act.

Outlook improves as State's mental health focus shifts ...at least geographically

Detroit TV evening newscasts used to tell of terrible things happening at "the State Hospital near Ypsilanti" but, when Michigan Governor Engler solved the mental health crisis by closing the treatment facilities and putting patients on the streets, the property's new owners became "the new Toyota Research Facility near Ann Arbor."

It's on the same land, but it's in York Township.

Megashoppes provide "destination" for antiquers



Salt City Antiques
15 East Cross (487-1257)

Carol McEachren moved her shop from Saline and now boasts ten dealers in her labyrinth of eight interconnected display rooms totaling 3300 square feet of display space. Her enormous collection features antiques, home décor, and gift items behind the longest awning in the neighborhood, right next door to the Cross Street pedestrian entry to Frog Island Park. Her entrance (off Rice Street, across from The Old Caboose) leaves Salt City with the largest display windows facing East Cross Street.

Apple Annie's & Jim MacDonald's
29 East Cross (481-0555)

This historic business entered the district's antique tradition 31 years ago as "Jim MacDonald's Antiques," then added Lynn Radtke's "Apple Annie's Vintage Clothing." Now they have added to their family of collector/vendors: Jim's brother Rod brought in his rare book collection and this year sisters Mary Ellen Antonelli and Susan Bareis moved "Silver Spoon Antiques" from next door with their vintage costume and estate jewelry to round out a magificent display of unusual and tasty items.

Cady's Grill & Bar
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new menu ▪ superb collection of wines
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Of "Café Luwak," viewers argue "Forrest is "too short," but they know the Rag's paper boy

In "Capturing an Ypsi Moment," that looks a lot like local historian James Thomas Mann making his exit to the left

In the next *Rag*:
What the Creative Community has known all along: Why this district never made it as an "Artists' Colony"

Depot Town Rag

"All the news that fits, we print"
A monthly publication of
the Depot Town Association, Inc.
The Old Caboose
400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198
To the editor:
thomasdodd@comcast.net

The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Gary McKeever, President
Merrell Guerrea, Vice President
Ruth Ann Jamnick, Treasurer
Sandee French, Scy. & Past President
Website: www.depottown.org
DTA meets at 6:30 p.m on the third Wednesday of each month at Café Luwak, 42 East Cross Street.

Shuler's primitivism fits our style

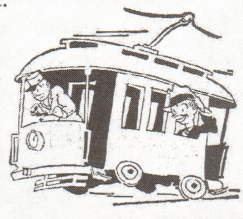
Grandma Moses may be hiding out in Depot Town. For those who miss the primitive interpretation of American life created by that famous painter, Marlena Shuler's renditions of life in Ypsilanti can fill the cultural gap. "Life on the farm" is forsaken for "life on the street" and Shuler's streets look terribly familiar. So do her characters.

"Find Yourself in Ypsilanti" is a series of acrylic paintings devoted to our town and recently exhibited at Café Luwak and currently showing at What Is That gallery in downtown Ypsilanti. "Our quirky, fun town has the unique atmosphere of both village-like traditions and progressive big city ideas," says the painter who lives just a block from the depot. "It makes for a pleasant, stimulating place to 'find oneself.'"

In her works viewers can find an outgoing mayor handing over the town concerns to an incoming mayor, families enjoying ice cream at a neighborhood hang-out, and university students infiltrating Townie Life. Shuler highlights "local small business owners, regular patrons, flyers announcing annual entertainments, celebrated landmarks, and highlights of local history" in her rectangular views of life on the streets of Ypsilanti.

Contact the artist: 316 E. Forest Ave., Ypsilanti, MI 48198, or marraeshuler@aol.com

Old-timers claim A² attitudes toward us can be traced back to when the Ypsi/Ann trolley quit bringing the UM boys to Ypsi to date girls from the Normal School.



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Join the judges in the street at 8 p.m. Saturday, 29 November, as they create awards for every window on the block that carries out the "Toys & Trains" theme for the holidays. Leaving our window lights on after hours reminds pedestrians of our treasures inside during your regular business hours.

Coincidentally:
Washtenaw County Historical Society's
TOYS & TRAINS EXHIBIT
Museum on Main Street
January/February
500 N. Main St., Ann Arbor
Wed, Sat, Sun noon-4 p.m

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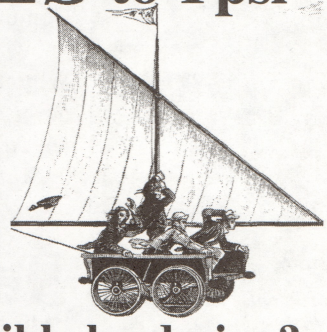
Only *4 MILES* to Ypsi

Arborlanders are often surprised to find that Ypsilanti is so close; it just *seems* farther. Although few seem to need directions, highway mile-markers are there to help.



Ypsi/Arbor: Incompatible by design?

City planners could argue that the problems between Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor are more than just attitude; the problem is truly a lack of connectivity. Few physical qualities of the two towns connect in any way. No single highway runs from the center of one to the center of the other. Ypsi's main street, Michigan Avenue, veers off to the southeast following the Native American trail that cut across the lower peninsula. A²'s Main Street starts at a giant shopping center and ends at a freeway entrance on the way to Flint.

Ypsi's Huron Street becomes Huron Parkway as it nears A², but there is no connection with A²'s Huron Street. Ours goes north and south; theirs runs east and west. No connectivity other than its namesake.

Washtenaw Avenue comes within a block of Ypsi's downtown, but meanders off to join with A²'s disconnected Huron Street.

Likewise with our shared Presidential street: Ypsilanti's Washington runs north/south, A²'s runs east/west. A²'s State Street is one of the easiest to find in that town, but only Ypsi folks paying water bills know how to find ours out by Willow Run Airport.

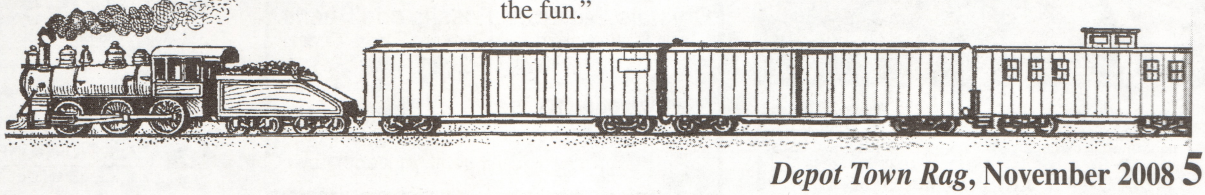
Cross Street/Packard Road may be the most compatible penetrator route we share; they follow the route of the Interurban railway and come closest to the two central business districts. One hundred years ago this connector was actually called South Ypsilanti Street as it left Ann Arbor—just like Dexter Avenue, Saline-Ann Arbor, and Whitmore Lake Roads indicate where they are going as they leave the Washtenaw County seat.

Perhaps only gravity can make the surest connection between the two burgs. Water runs down hill and the Mighty Huron River continues to deposit the effluvia of its broad northwest collection area into the funnel of Ypsilanti as it makes its way through Belleville, Flat Rock, and Monroe County toward Lake Erie. After its 194-mile trip, the water recognizes that it was at Ypsilanti where it gained its true direction and order.

Street names shared, but not connected:

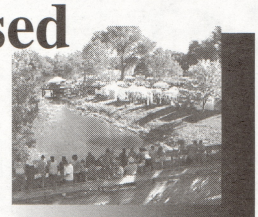
Arlington	Cambridge	Cedarbend	Charles
Dwight	Fairview	Hiawatha	Hillside
Maple	Medford	Michigan	Oxford
Pineview & Pine View		Red Oak	Russell
Summit	Woodside	Young	University

Maybe Ann Arbor needs something more charming about it...like a train running through. (It has one? Never mind.)



Open your car windows and sing along...

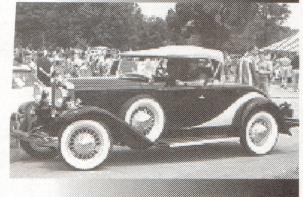
You'll be surprised



We're just outside of Detroit,
A block off I-94. You'll be surprised.
There is plenty to see,
And there's parking galore!
You'll be surprised.

This town is not the size of Ann Arbor
But there's a certain charm that we harbor
We've got the charm of the past
And it's an ethic that lasts.
You'll be surprised.
We've got a town that is small,
But at Festival times, You'll be surprised.
We have a lot of parades
And these are not mere charades.
You'll be surprised.

All the cars that we show off are old ones
They're a part of this community's gold ones
So come and dance in the street
We'll help keep the beat.
You'll be surprised.



We still wait for the trains
Like we were born without brains.
You'll be surprised.
Ypsi sings an old song
And you can all sing along.
Cars and trucks and planes come together
We show them off whatever the weather
Music, art, and stuff for your shanty,
You'll have a great time in old Ypsilanti.

Observed in A²: "Dreams of Ypsi"

We were characterized by *The Ann Arbor Observer* as "…Washtenaw County's poorest city." In their April story, Zingerman's co-owner Paul Saginaw saw Ypsi "as a logical move to 'leverage' our brand but not in the most profitable way."

"…It could be a place for the community to sit down together," Saginaw said. "The president of a bank, a professor from Eastern Michigan University, people who work at City Hall, people from southwest Ypsilanti, and someone who just got out of prison are all dining at large tables together…and just feel good for a while…"

Locals say this could be as few as two people who are already sitting at a bar here or downtown. Leverage is an old tradition here.

Not a done deal, expanding to Ypsilanti is something "I want to make happen," Saginaw told *The Observer*. "It's bothered me that over the years [that] Zingerman's is leaving middle-and lower-income people behind."

Counterpoint:

In the next *Observer*, Ypsi mayor Paul Schreiber put a positive spin on the flap: "There's already plenty going on in Ypsilanti, "said Hizzoner. "We look forward to Zingerman's joining us in the fun."

Let's review:

The 7 Wonders of Depot Town

1. MCRR Depot & Freighthouse

Embarrassed as we are about their condition, they are eponymous to our neighborhood. Some have said a "good fire" could be a win/win situation, but locals love these structures—even as they are today. Without them, we would just be "Ypsi's East Side." The passing trains and all their appurtenances contribute greatly to the dynamic element of the neighborhood.

2. Crossing Guard Tower

A replica of an earlier signal tower, this octagonal exclamation point bookends the block (with the famed Water Tower up the hill) to remind us of our live tracks, railroad signals, and our rhythm of continuity.

3. The Old Caboose

More than one hundred years old, the caboose sits in our unique Market Plaza to tantalize the tots and reactivate the memories of those who used to wave as they rolled by.

4. Museums

Three spectacular collections surround us: Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum, Michigan Firehouse Museum, and the Ypsilanti Historical Museum. RM Auctions on Forest Avenue is not a museum, but it's a cool Depot Town amenity too!

5. Huron River

No one takes this lovely body of water for granted after a walk over the Cross Street Bridge and back under via the Tridge.

6. Frog Island & Riveride Parks

Our "island backyard" hosts concerts, athletic events, gardeners, dog-walkers, and lovers in a bucolic setting in the City. As Central Park is to NYC, Riverside joins Depot Town with Downtown and all the community comes here to play together.

7. Forty unique businesses

Stretched from the river to the railroad track, taverns, restaurants, and shops continue to succeed in one of Michigan's original shopping centers. At 173 years old, this mall seems to be working out just swell.

Visit us at the **Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum**

Hours:
Mon-Fri 1:30-5pm
Sat 10am-5pm
Sun. noon-5pm

www.ypsiautoheritage.org

Admission
Adults $3
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LUWAK CUPPING PARTY
(and Forrest Karnopp's 14th birthday)
Café Luwak
1-4 p.m. Sunday, 2 November
(Never tasted Luwak coffee? See "The Bucket List" with Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman who recommend you do before you die.)

WINDOW DECORATION AWARDS
8 p.m. Saturday 29 November
TOY & TRAIN
CHRISTMAS THEMES
A seasonal Depot Town event since 1976

SALT CITY ANTIQUES
Carol McEachran Depot Town
15 East Cross 487-1257
Mon-Sat 10a.m.-5p.m.
Sun noon-5p.m. Closed Wed
Antiques • Home Decor • Gift Items

It's Harvest Time!

Ypsilanti's Farmers' Market

In historic Depot Town

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Sam Cooke's "Doo Wop Town"

Don't know much about our heritage
Can't understand that hokey festival
Don't know much about our history
Almost flunked that Eastern class I took
But I do know about Depot Town
How we love it so when you come down
What a wonderful place for you to be
Don't know much about City Hall
Know even less about Willow Run
What's all the fuss about Ann Arbor?
Don't even know what that freeway's for!
But I do know where East Cross Street
Intersects with River Street
What a wonderful place for us to be.
I am not a sociologist,
But suppose that I'm trying to be.
Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town
What a wonderful place for you and me.

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